Info Pile: The City

Hey everyone, Alex here,
If you haven't read through the website, I'm the producer of this project and I'll help you navigate the city, clear things up and give a bit of personal insights between the narration bits.

A little disclaimer upfront:
As you might have notices, this is a PDF document and not a webpage.
Making a website takes time and I didn't want to rush this page, so the web version is coming soon.

This document is a very brief and very incomplete overview of the broad structure of the city. It should give just enough information to form an idea of the world in your head while leaving enough to explore and imagine.

A Brief History of Uphor:

I'll start things off with a short overview of some historical events that lead to the Uphor we have today. The short stories are going to be set in modern Uphor (around the year 350), but it helps to understand the historical context of the city.

The Future City Project (roughly1500 years before Uphor)

> The original Uphor started as a public housing project over 1500 years ago. Conceived and designed as "the perfect city" the project tested out radical ideas of the time to prevent overcrowded cities and work against the formation of slums.
> Only a decade later, it was shut down for legal and ethical reasons.
> One accusation against the project was the "commodification of human rights."
> It got partly torn down before the last money ran out and the site was abandoned.

The original Uphor is modeled after a few concepts of the perfect city.
King Camp Gillette, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright were the primary inspiration.
Some more modern approaches influenced the design as well, especially cities with hexagonal grid designs. I love that 1920s attitude of "fixing the city and designing the perfect neighborhood" and going overboard and overdesign everything.

Another inspirations were public housing projects like the Pruitt-Igoe Project.
(The Novel High Rise by J.G. Ballards also comes to mind) The most prominent architectural styles left from that era are Modernism and Brutalism.

Uphor and the military:

After some years the government rented the site out to the military as an urban testing site.
Although the idea was to test explosives and blow it up, the remote positioning and natural protection by surrounding mountains gave tactical advantages, so it was transformed into a military base.

The military added underground tunnels, bunkers and extensive defense infrastructure. As well as some barracks and training grounds.

Uphor between a torn nation

After a civil war, the military was banished from the territory which soon attracted artists and squatters.

Back then, it was not a functioning city, but it somehow remained a livable place. I've read stories about canned food being used as currency. Might have been a myth, but I found it funny.

Later It became a novelty place for architecture projects that would not have been approved in a "real" city.

"A chair, a lamp and a building in Uphor" was a sort of the rite of passage for architects. A lot of different styles are left from that era. Entire city blocks designed in a singular style and the next block over unrecognizably different. Everything from Art Nouveau to postmodernism

The rest of the history is still muddled and up for interpretation.

Uphor in the face of the apocalypse:

I'll skip the apocalypse for now. It's not that important for your writing anyhow. What I know is that the water supply is contaminated and that the entire population decreases rapidly. Large cities are especially affected. A group of refugees finds Uphor and the existing infrastructure lends itself perfectly to defend against the threat. This is year 0 for us.

Post-post-apocalypse (Year 00 and forward)

The apocalypse came and went. The people that fled to Uphor were able to build up a a community that feels more and more like a proper city.
More refugee groups join and the city grows over the years into a large metropole.
The city is always expanding and responding to the changing needs of its population.

Roughly 350 years later and here we are.

Uphor, around the 350 year mark, overlaps time-wise with our current time. That means moving forward each year in this world roughly equates to a year in Uphor. The Stories we write are written simultaneously in the world of Uphor.

Uphor Now

Uphor exists 350 years after the apocalypse.
With its preexisting infrastructure, the City was the perfect refuge from the catastrophe. Nowadays, it is a buzzing Metropolis with comfortable living conditions. As of now, Uphor is the only known human settlement left.
The city is not as advanced as the world used to be before, but it is still quite technological.

Government and the Economy

Few things shape the city as much as the attitude towards work. For the first couple of generations, people had to focus on staying alive. It was a group effort and everyone had to do their part. Life expectancy was short and labor was hard.

Slowly labor became increasingly automated and goods could be distributed wherever they were needed.
The demand for work dropped rapidly as the city used more of their former technologies.
Life was better, and the city boomed.
Rather than establishing a currency, the loosely formed government scaled up the model of their need-based/resource based economy.
Today, every necessity is, on a basic level, free: housing, food, water, healthcare, transportation and even art and entertainment.

For an excellent example of a resource-based economy, I recommend “the dispossessed” by Ursula K. Le Guin

There is no compulsion to work but people still choose to work to pay for better goods and services, as well as luxury items.
For example: The standard-issue mattress is perfectly adequate to sleep on and many people don’t feel the need to upgrade, but some may choose to buy a better one.

On the flip side, some companies now put a lot of money and energy into making their standard issue lines as bothersome as possible to get people to upgrade. They still have to pass strict government regulation, but the system isn’t perfect.

The best-paying jobs are probably scientists, especially working for government-funded brands. Next to science, art and entertainment is probably the biggest business in Uphor.
“Luxury” goods and services make a lot of money too.
For example: In Uphor, having someone else clean your house is a great luxury and cleaners are regarded as experts in their craft, well compensated and respected.

Apparently, you can hire people to pretend to clean your home if you don’t have the money for the real thing. It might just be an urban legend though. I haven’t seen anyone openly advertise something like that.
As far as I know, this trend originated when the automated cleaning felt too impersonal to some and they wanted a more detail-oriented and personal-feeling experience. Those who build up a reputation for themselves are treated like Michelin-star cooks.

Culture

Rationality and pragmatism are highly valued and encouraged in the society as a whole.
Citizens often get quite passionate, a little weird and oddly specific about their hobbies and the things they like.

The keeping of house plants is a highly sought-after hobby. Plants aren’t cheap, but greenery, while present, is still scarce in the city.

Next to hobbies, inhabitants give a lot of importance to work, either on a social level to show support for causes, organizations or brands or to pay for further luxuries.

Architecture

Life in the city is quite eclectic. Neighborhoods have vastly different architectural styles, though a lot of it can be traced back to modernism and brutalism.

Energy and Dust

Every big house or small neighborhood has their own energy reactor. The reactor assimilates solid matter and produces heat. When it cools down, it expels excess and foreign materials as dust.
That system was already used before the apocalypse by big power plants.
In a few instances, the material used in the assimilation became too hot and too big to be contained and burned massive holes miles deep into the earth. Once it reached critical mass, it was nearly impossible to stop. The massive amount of dust in the atmosphere required better water filtration.
Nowadays the reactors are better and more efficient, but the city continues to release a significant amount of dust into the atmosphere.

I only learned later that this is an actual fear people had in the 70s and 80s about nuclear reactors (called the china syndrome).
This material had some role to play in the lead up to the apocalypse.
Think of it as plutonium on steroids, with only an insignificant trace amount of the radioactivity.

SEDs and Sunlight

Because of the power plants, a semi-permanent dust cloud covers the sky. On normal days, the two suns are only visible when rising or setting. Against the lack of daylight, there are massive floodlights all around the city, mimicking the natural suns. (SED for Sun Emitting Diode).
The planet orbits two stars which, in turn, orbit each other. The year is also split in two, a “summer year” and a “winter year”, both roughly 8 months long, ending respectively at the spring and the autumn equinox. Because of the SEDs, Uphor feels almost the same all year round, with only a minor change in temperature between seasons.

Because of the atmosphere around Uphor, sunsets and sunrises can be quite beautiful.

Public Transportation

Citizens move around the city mainly by public transport.
There’s a vast net of trains, underground as well as aboveground, all throughout Uphor. Personal vehicles are only used by government-sanctioned organizations such as the fire departments, police and medics.

Eyes

The eyes of the people in this world shift in *colour*. Everyone has a base eye *colour*, which can become warmer or colder, and in extreme situations, it may even change completely. It is less noticeable on people with naturally darker eyes and more noticeable on people with bright eyes. As people get to know someone, they slowly pick up on what the different colors mean, like reading their body language or expression.
I personally use the shifting eyes often in my writing because it’s another way to show, hide and or misread information about characters.

Wasteland

Uphor is bordered by wasteland from the apocalypse.
There’s a wall and/or fences surrounding the city, but there is no ban on going outside. There might still be dangers outside the city walls but mainly just grayish nothing. The city’s energy production covers everything outside in a thick layer of dust.

Inside the wall is also plenty of wasteland and uninhabited space.
While populated areas keep streets clean and dust free, rural areas,

"poor" areas, or completely unpopulated spaces are mainly left untreated and dusty. The "Wasteland" inside the city walls comprises old city blocks, housing projects that didn't stand the test of time, and rubble.

The inner wastelands are fun to explore, especially for someone who's interested in older civilizations and how things used to be before the apocalypse. Just take some warm clothes. Without the SEDs, it can get quite cold out there. And the dust gets everywhere!

Companies and Brands:

RW

This company has been around since year 1. Water played some role in the apocalypse and RW had the best filtration systems. The mystery mix of added minerals helped with the low life expectancy of the early generations.
Now RW is one of the biggest companies in Uphor. They handle the entire public water supply, one of the largest agricultural manufacturers relying on hydroponic and vertical farming, and they have their hands in various research fields.

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1. realWater: the standard-issue purified water with a secret blend of added minerals to keep the population healthy. This brand also includes a line of flavored waters that tries to mask the distinctive taste of the water.
2. realWater reserve: the premium brand with all of the minerals and a fresh water taste.

But they have brands in most daily life sectors.

Think "Coca Cola meets Umbrella Corp." but less evil than either of them... as far as I know, I don't work there, but maybe you do.
By the way, most houses have two sinks, one for use water and one for drinking water.

"M7" Mirror

Everyone in Uphor gets a smartphone-like communication device that acts as an ID, keys, public transport ticket and credit card. It's a milky, nearly transparent glass slab of about 6 inches with a small overlapping metal rectangle on the upper side. They're calibrated to the user's eyes and information on the screen can, unless intentionally shared, not be seen by others.

Other Camps, Cities, Civilizations

Uphor hasn't made contact with any other settled survivors outside its walls. The occasional nomadic survivors stopped coming after the first 100 years. It is believed that there are more humans out there, just not within the surrounding few hundred miles.
There are talks about establishing a sister city, but no apparent action has been taken yet.
The city is big enough and might hold twice the number of citizens without extending its borders.

Alrighty, thats it for now. More is coming soon.
If this inspired you in some way and you wanna create something, reach out and connect.
All the best, Alex